



U.S. Department of Justice

Middle District of North Carolina

101 South Edgeworth Street

Phone (336) 333-5351

United States Attorney

Greensboro, NC 27401

Criminal Fax (336) 333-5381

Civil Fax (336) 333-5257

Administration Fax (336) 333-5561

Contact: Lynne Klauer
Assistant United States Attorney
Press Officer
336-333-5351

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 16, 2007

CONVICTION IN SEX CRIMES INVOLVING A MINOR

Greensboro Resident Faces Life in Federal Prison

GREENSBORO, NC - Warshahennedige Fernando, age 43, a citizen of Sri Lanka, currently residing in Greensboro was convicted of attempting to entice a minor and attempting to transfer obscene matter to a minor, announced Anna Mills Wagoner, United States Attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina. The verdict was rendered on April 11, 2007.

On August 1, 2006, Fernando initiated an online conversation with an undercover detective employed with the Guilford County Sheriff's Department, who was posing as a fourteen year-old girl. During the chats, Fernando e-mailed a picture of his genitals to the undercover officer and described, in graphic detail, the sex acts that he was seeking. Fernando repeatedly suggested that they meet in-person, and he was arrested on August 9, 2006, after he arrived at Borders Bookstore on High Point Road in Greensboro. After a three day trial before Federal District Court Judge N. Carlton Tilley, the jury deliberated for approximately 30 minutes before convicting on each count.

Fernando is scheduled to be sentenced on August 17, 2007 in federal district court in Greensboro. He faces a mandatory minimum of ten years, up to a maximum of life in prison on the enticement conviction alone. Fernando remains in custody pending sentencing.

The investigation was conducted by the Guilford County Sheriff's Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michael DeFranco.

This case was pursued as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, the United States Department of Justice launched Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by U. S. Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

###